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SUBJECT Coal Mining by Slave Laborers near Voroshilovgrad

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The prisoners there, about two thousand, were a small part of the total prisoners in the area, for there were many camps, all under NKVD jurisdiction which had its headquarters at Almaznaye, 18 kms from Lubovka. Some contained Soviet people, some German prisoners of war, German civilians from Czechoslovakia and some Rumanian prisoners of war. The number employed at specific mines varied, some mines using up to three thousand laborers. I worked in several different mines, but conditions were the same in all of them. All had very poor ventilation and there was much gas present. We had to work in a prone position to shovel the coal into the push carts. Then the push carts were moved by hand to the main shaft. Water was knee deep in most of the main tunnels. We worked in teams (two persons) and were supposed to fill (per team) 60 to 70 push carts per shift. Seldom were we able to do this much.

2. We were supposed to work eight hours per day, but we worked 10, 12 and sometimes 16 hours per day, seven days a week. On rare occasions we were given a day off. During my first year in the mines the camp authorities collected all of our pay from the coal mine in return for which we were given our meals free. Later, we were paid directly but had to pay for our meals. As an example of the cost, a bowl of thin, cucumber soup cost 50 kopecks; a lunch meal, four rubles, 50 kopecks; one kilogram of bread, three rubles 60 kopecks (in the black market the same amount of bread cost 40 rubles). We were often forced to go to work without food and on occasions we went on strike, refusing to work unless we received food. When this happened, the mine officials would give us some thin, watered soup. Generally, in the morning and evening we received a thin sauerkraut or pickle soup. The lunch

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